

# **The Other Kalasha**

## **A Survey of Kalashamun-Speaking People in Southern Chitral**

### **Part I: The Eastern Area**

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All Chitralis have heard the stories of the Kalasha rulers of the past. According to the legend, the entire southern part of their mountainous district was once under the rule of non-Muslim kings, whose last heirs are now the inhabitants of the three valleys of Rumbur, Bumburet and Birir (<sup>1</sup>).

Many stories are told about these warrior kings, like Raja Wai, Bula Singh or Shalak Shah. Schomberg was shown in 1936 the site of the fort of Raja Wai, the last of the Kalasha kings, in the village of Batrik in Bumburet, which is still pointed out today (Schomberg 1938: 186). Raja Wai is the hero of many Kalasha myths, some of which have been reported by Loude (1980: 65-67) and Wazir Ali Shah, like the story of his conquest of Nuristan, in which the arrogance shown when he forced some young captive girls to dance naked for him is punished by the wrath of Mahandeo (Wazir Ali Shah 1974a: 24).

The story tells that these Kalasha rulers were defeated by the first Muslim kings of Chitral, the legendary Rais, about whom quite little is known (Biddulph 1986: 150; Schomberg 1938: 262 ff.; Siiger 1956: 33), and this defeat is variously dated between the 14th (Wazir Ali Shah 1974b: 70) and the 15th or 16th century (Siiger 1956: 33; Loude 1984: 34).

(<sup>1</sup>) The Kalasha are a small tribe of about 2500 people living in the District of Chitral in northwestern Pakistan, who have been the subject of ethnographical interest due to their unique peculiarity of being a community of Indo-European language that has preserved until the present day their ancient pre-Islamic religion and social organization in an area where all the surrounding peoples, who are mostly also of Indo-European descent, have, more or less recently, embraced the Islamic faith. For this reason, the Kalasha were called Kafir, i.e. 'pagan', by their neighbours, and this adjective is still widely used in the western literature about them. Since the term has a very derogatory connotation in the languages of the area, however, we shall refrain from using it.

It is to be doubted, however, that the Kalasha actually ever had the kind of princely rulers that characterized the more recent Muslim states in the area, such as the one of the historical Kator family who controlled the Chitral area, including the subjugated Kalasha, until Pakistan's independence in 1947. There are many reasons to believe that the so-called Kalasha kings of the past were actually a peculiar kind of tribal 'big men' who were much closer to the figure of the redistributory chief than to that of a prince <sup>(2)</sup>.

Though the Kalasha never had kings, at any rate, the fact that they were once present and dominant in a much larger area than the three valleys of today is widely considered historical, though estimates about the extension of this area vary widely.

Oral traditions concerning this former presence in the district of Chitral are very widespread in the region and Robertson recorded already in 1890 that, according to the Kam of present-day Nuristan, 'the whole of the country from the Eastern Kafiristan frontier as far as Gilgit, was in former times inhabited by the Kalasha' (Robertson 1974: 159).

However, most of the legends heard today among the Chitralis, as well as among the Kalasha, indicate that the former presence of the latter was limited to the southern areas of the district of Chitral. Some of these legends have been reported by Wazir Ali Shah (1974b: 70, 78-79) and Loude (1980: 166-68).

The Danish ethnographer Halfdaan Siiger collected a famous song, sung to this day in the spring festival of Joshi, which enumerates places of former Kalasha presence in a progression that moves from Asmar to the south of Chitral District to the Dorah pass in the Lutkho valley. Siiger handed his version to Morgenstierne, who published it in 1973 in interlinear comparison with variously collected other versions (Morgenstierne 1973: 57-65). According to Morgenstierne, the song has two kinds of interpretations, or versions: in an irenic mode, it can be read as the triumphant advance of spring from south to north, with the flowers blooming to announce the merriments of Joshi; in an epic mode, it is the advance of Kalasha armies from the south to conquer Chitral. Whichever the interpretation, however, most of the places mentioned in the song are concentrated in southern Chitral, and it seems unlikely that Kalasha presence ever extended further north than Reshun (Morgenstierne 1932: 47).

Speculations about the duration of Kalasha presence and egemony in Chitral vary most widely from Schomberg's thesis that the Kalasha were the aboriginal inhabitants of all Chitral (Schomberg 1938: 209-11), to Siiger and Loude's opinion that their presence in southern Chitral was only a brief stage in their migration from the south (Siiger 1956: 34; Loude 1984: 34). These problems shall be briefly touched upon in the third part of this report.

<sup>(2)</sup> This thesis, already argued in a previous work (Alb. Cacopardo 1974), is also supported by new elements of oral tradition from our last field stay. See the remark on this point by Wazir Ali Shah (1974b: 70).

The presence of the Kalasha outside the three valleys is also documented by many place names of Kalasha origin (Schomberg 1938: 210), only a few of which are mentioned by Morgenstierne (1973). But there is more to it: several communities of Muslim converts were known to have been speaking Kalashamun <sup>(3)</sup> until recent times in various side valleys and even in the main Kunar valley.

Though nobody had ever investigated these communities directly before the present research, Biddulph already reported in 1880 the presence of Kalashamun speaking people, whom he extravagantly qualified as Siah Posh <sup>(4)</sup>, in 'Jinjiret, Loi, Sawair, Nager and Shishi' (1986: 64).

A few years after the publication of Biddulph's book, Sir George Scott Robertson was the first and last European to visit and study the culture of the inhabitants of present-day Nuristan, wild and powerful neighbours of the Kalasha, before they were forcibly converted and subjugated by the Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman in 1896. On his way to Kamdesh, Robertson stopped one day in the valley of Urtsun, which was then inhabited by non-Muslim Kalasha, whom he describes as more proud and warlike than their fellow tribesmen of Bumburet (Robertson 1974: 4-9).

In 1904 Captain Gurdon, who became the first British political agent of Chitral after participating in the historical siege of its fort at the time of British conquest in 1895, published a Military Report on Chitral (quoted in Morgenstierne 1965: 187) with the following data about Kalasha-speaking communities:

Rumbur valley	20 families
Bimboret valley	59 families
Birir valley	48 families (= 401 persons)
Jinjiret Kuh	3 families
Suwir	26 families
Urtsun	15 families
Kalkatak	16 families
Lawai	27 families

Gurdon's data were the only ones so far available about Kalashamun-speaking people outside the three valleys, but as we shall soon see, they were approximate and largely incomplete.

<sup>(3)</sup> Morgenstierne was mistaken in calling *Kalasha* the language of the *Kalash*. Kalash is the Chitrali word to designate the people who, as Parkes first remarked as late as 1988 (Parkes 1988), call themselves *Kal'asa*. The language of the *Kal'asa* is not called Kalashwar (as some have written), which is again the Chitrali name for it, but *Kalasham'un* (or *m'und*) in the Northern dialect and *Kalasham'andr*, or *-m'and*, in the other ones.

<sup>(4)</sup> Siah-Posh, meaning 'black robe' in Persian, is the old name given to the speakers of the various dialects of what is now classified as the Kati language, one of the five idioms of Nuristan. See Robertson 1974: 74-75, and, for the modern scientific systematization, Fussman 1972.

It was, at any rate, on the basis of Gurdon's information that Morgenstierne, the Norwegian linguist who first studied systematically the languages of the area, tried to obtain samples of the language of these settlements during his field work in 1929<sup>(5)</sup>.

Though he worked mainly with informants from Rumbur, Morgenstierne also paid a quick visit to the village of Urtsun, which he found to be still mostly unconverted. There he obtained a good sample of the local Kalasha dialect from a man named Chanlu, a prominent elder who was subsequently interviewed by Shahzada Hussam ul-Mulk on November 30th, 1937, some time before he was converted to Islam (Hussam ul-Mulk: 26). More about him will be said in the second section of this report.

After leaving the field, Morgenstierne kept in touch with Wazir Ali Shah, who later provided him with samples from the language of Lawi, Suwir and Kalkatak. On the basis of this and some other information, Morgenstierne identified two main subdivisions or dialects of the Kalasha language, the first of which, in his opinion, was spoken in Rumbur, Bumburet and Birir (Northern Kalasha), while the second one extended to Suwir, Lawi, Kalkatak, Urtsun (with some significant differences) 'and, probably, Jinjeret Kuh': this he called Southern Kalasha (Morgenstierne 1965: 188).

Schomberg, on the other hand, who visited Chitral in 1936, mentions 'the converted Kafirs of the Shishi Kuh' who 'still speak their own tongue', while 'their fellows at Drosh, who were converted two or three generations ago, speak Chitrali' (Schomberg 1938: 212). Neither Shishi Kuh nor Drosh had been investigated by Morgenstierne.

This was more or less the last information available about these communities of Kalashamun speakers. After that, they seemed to disappear from the literature, and were apparently forgotten to the point that Siiger writes that the Kalasha 'were driven away by the Rais Mehtars to their present valleys' (Siiger 1956: 33), while the above mentioned information was already there to prove that, whenever the Kalasha were subjugated, they certainly were not suddenly expelled to Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir<sup>(6)</sup>.

(5) It may be worth noting that Grierson, in his contribution on the Kalasha language for the Linguistic Survey of India, stated that 'the Kalashis, or Kalash Kafirs, inhabit the small valleys of Bomboret, Kalashgum and Birir, south-west of the town of Chatrar [...]. They are Musalmans, and are subject to Chatrar, but are claimed by the Bashgali as slaves' (Grierson 1919: 70). This is only one example of the wealth of misinformation that has been, and still is, printed about the Kalasha. It is interesting, however, that Grierson should mention only this limited territory at a time when, as we shall see, Kalashamun was certainly spoken in a much wider area.

(6) More recent ethnographers of the Kalasha have been more aware of the existence of the Eastern Area. The Austrian researcher Karl Wutt, who briefly visited Jinjeret Kuh in the 1970's, correctly mentions the presence of Kalashamun-speaking people there, as well as in Urtsun, Shishi Kuh and 'the surroundings of Drosh' (Wutt 1976: 159). And Peter Parkes gives more or less the same information, though he seems convinced that conversion took place much earlier than it actually did (Parkes 1983: 9, 16).

## *The Present Research*

Thus when we started out for this inquiry, we had little idea whether anybody at all still spoke the language of the Kalasha outside the three valleys, though it was reasonable to suppose that, if it was still spoken in Morgenstierne and Schomberg's time, there would be many people living who must have used the language as their mother tongue throughout their youth.

Summing up the available information, it did not amount to much. We knew that Schomberg and Biddulph mentioned Shishi Kuh, a long and rather narrow valley to the East of the Kunar river which is also the theatre of some myths reported by Loude (1980: 111; 1987: 202-203; Loude & Lièvre 1984: 145). Of the villages studied by Morgenstierne and mentioned by Gurdon, only Lawi is close to Shishi Kuh, but we knew nothing of the rest of the valley. We thus included Shishi Kuh in the scope of our research.

We knew Urtsun had been visited by Robertson and briefly studied by Morgenstierne and Hussam ul-Mulk, but there was very little information available on a valley that seemed bound to preserve lots of pre-Muslim memories. Very little, on the other hand, was known of Jinjeret Kuh, a valley very similar to that of Birir and just south of it, which had been confused by Gurdon, as we shall see, with the hamlet at the mouth of the valley. We had heard about the Kalasha in Jinjeret Kuh during our field stays in Kalashgum in 1973 and 1977. Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh were thus included in the planned itinerary.

As far as the main valley is concerned, Drosh was mentioned by Schomberg and Wazir Ali Shah as formerly Kalasha, while Suwir and Kalkatak were consistently reported as Kalashamun-speaking, but had also never been visited by researchers. Thus these main valley settlements completed the list of places to visit.

The purpose of our survey has been to inquire about:

- the present diffusion of the Kalasha language, its passive and active knowledge, and its use by people of different age;
- the attitude towards the pre-Muslim culture of the past;
- the genealogical memory of the people and the survival of the Kalasha kinship system of patrilineal exogamous clans;
- the surviving memories about the Kalasha past, especially concerning mythological knowledge and ritual behaviour;
- the location of relevant sites, such as the male deities' open air sanctuaries (*d'ewa dur*), the village temple known as *ĵ'eṣṭak han*, the cemeteries, and the womens' confinement house known as *baš'ali*. Since the spacial disposition of these sites is constant and culturally significant in Kalasha society (Alb. Cacopardo 1985), it was important to verify whether it was repeated in these so far unknown settlements;
- time and circumstances of conversion to Islam.

Field research was carried out by the present author and his brother Augusto Cacopardo in the summer 1989 and briefly supplemented with a few days' further

work in September 1990. Thanks to the experience and knowledge acquired through our field stays among the Kalasha, we were able to collect significant information despite the limited time available for field work in the former Kalasha areas, which did not exceed the total of three weeks. Though our results are liable to be integrated and refined through further research, we have decided to publish them because the new information acquired is already of considerable relevance for Kalasha studies.

### *Attitude towards the Culture of the Past*

It must be emphasized from the outstart that this work has been carried out under conditions of extreme difficulty. These converted Kalasha living outside the Kalashgum are very different from the Muslim Kalasha who live within the valleys of Bumboret, Rumbur and Birir in close contact with their unconverted relatives. Not only do they hate to remember their pre-Muslim past: they are actively engaged in a very determined attempt to erase any possible trace of its existence. Since this effort is strongly supported by the Islamic enthusiasm of the local mullahs (both of Kho and Kalasha descent) any inquiry into the Kalasha past becomes a very touchy subject even from a strictly religious point of view.

In this respect, these Kalasha converts are also very different from their former non-Muslim neighbours of Nuristan. The latter have taken up the new Muslim faith while maintaining their condition of isolation in their rugged mountain valleys, a vast area where even today there is no market-place to be found and very little contact with the outside world. Though they certainly cannot be suspected of a less than enthusiastic support of the Muslim faith, the Nuristanis have thus preserved the genealogical memory of their pre-Muslim ancestry as well as many of their tribal customs, including the economic pattern of subsistence, the architectural layout of houses and villages, food habits, division of labour, and various others (Dupree 1974; Edelberg & Jones 1979; Jones 1974; Newby 1958: 212 ff.).

The Kalasha converts of Chitral, on the contrary, seem to have taken the whole of Chitrali culture in all its aspects as synonymous of Muslim culture: to their eyes, apparently, to behave like a perfect Muslim means to behave like a perfect Chitrali. Thus they have taken great care in trying to eliminate all elements even of material culture that may be a mark of Kalasha identity, starting from the very conformation of their houses, which have been changed to suit the Chitrali model with an internal court surrounded by high walls — with the consequence that, in most instances, the very location of the village has had to be altered, moving the whole settlement to a nearby site. In several instances, even the name of the village has been changed.

It was quite inevitable that such a far-reaching 'cultural revolution' should invest the sphere of language, especially since Khowar and Kalashamun are so close and even the unconverted Kalasha have almost all become bilingual by now. The use of the Kalasha language has come to be regarded as a degraded and despicable habit that everybody (though with some exceptions) tries to avoid.

To understand the weight of this prejudice it must be emphasized that, besides the religious aspect, the Kalasha have been considered for the last few centuries as occupying the very bottom of the social scale in the area. While the Nuristanis ranked fairly high in the social consideration of their neighbours even in pre-Muslim times, the Kalasha, quite independently of their religion, had come to be universally despised owing to their condition of semi-slavery as subjects of the Chitral Mehtar. When Robertson wrote his often-quoted, and criticized, statement that the Kalasha were 'a most servile and degraded race' (Robertson 1974: 4), he did nothing but reflect the opinion of their neighbours on both sides of the present border. One of our small discoveries during this research has been that the term 'Kalash' (Khowar for Kalasha) is now used in Southern Chitral with a very offensive connotation, such as that of terms like 'nigger' or 'polack' in present-day United States. In this, it has apparently supplanted the term Kafir, which seems to have become altogether unpronounceable.

With this in mind, it is easy to understand what obstacles confronted the researcher on such a touchy subject, as well as why both Gurdon and Morgenstierne never came to know about many of the existing Kalasha-speaking settlements.

We have managed to overcome these difficulties only through a very delicate and respectful approach and thanks to the help of the family of Samat Khan from Drosh, a memorable Chitrali who had been the guide of many travellers and scholars including ourselves during previous field researches, and had acquired an uncommon sensibility to the problems of anthropological inquiry. Samat Khan himself, unfortunately, had passed away four years before, but his grandchild Salah-ud-Din — a student at Chitral College — did his best to help us.

### *The Findings*

We have thus been able to visit the Shishi Kuh valley, where we have found people speaking Kalashamun in the villages of Uzurbekande and Birga. There may be other lesser concentrations of Kalashamun speaking families in Shishi Kuh, since we have had conflicting reports of their presence at least in Kelas and Tar. Shishi Kuh has many other villages, with the presence of Kho, Pathan, Dangarik and Gujur people, as well as a community of Badakshi origin in the glacial basin of Madaklasht (Morgenstierne 1932: 67; Schomberg 1938: 205).

We have visited Lawi, above the mouth of the Shishi Kuh, and Gromel, which is the only Kalasha one of the seven villages composing Drosh. Between these two villages, there is a string of hamlets loosely spread at a certain height along the left flank of the Kunar valley: of these Azaddam, which is the new name of Kalashandam (Morgenstierne 1965: 189), Kaldam, Azurdam and Koturdam have been at times indicated as partly Kalashamun-speaking. We have not been able to visit the area, but we may estimate that there might be some forty families altogether who were of Kalasha mother tongue in the last generation there.

As we expected, we have found Kalashamun speakers in Kalkatak and Swir. A separate case is that of the valley of Biyori, now inhabited by speakers of Palula, the Dangarik language known as Phalura in western literature. Biyori is mentioned by Wazir Ali Shah (1974b: 70) among the 'Kalasha dominated areas'. Though there are some indications that inhabitants of the two lower villages of the valley, Mingal and Damaret, may be of Kalasha descent, the matter deserves further investigation. Kalashamun, however, is not known today in these villages, like in many other old Kalasha settlements of Lower Chitral.

We travelled, of course, to the valleys of Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh, which provided the most fruitful material to our research. Since Jinjeret Kuh is an entire valley with various villages and hundreds of people who currently use Kalashamun today, there is no doubt that Gurdon must have mistook it with the small hamlet of Jinjeret, at the mouth of this valley, where two or three families are said to have knowledge of the language even today, while the rest are Kho people who have moved in from the south.

This research has therefore covered most of the areas where Kalashamun is known today, though there may be more to investigate. Altogether, it has become clear that Gurdon's data had by far underestimated the number of Kalashamun-speaking people, and that, until some time ago, the Kalasha living in the valleys of Rumbur, Bumburet and Birir were *less* than those living in the rest of Chitral.

Besides this, we have heard oral tradition memories about Kalasha settlements that once existed in many other places of the main valley, such as Nagar, Broz, Khurkashande, Jughur, etc., but informants were unanimous in specifying that Kalasha presence in such places dates much further back than in the settlements mentioned earlier. It is not easy to establish whether their present occupants are people of Kalasha descent who, through a process similar to the one we are presently witnessing, have been entirely assimilated to the Kho, or people of Kho descent who have moved in from the north. The most likely hypothesis is that both instances occur. What must be stressed, at any rate, is that there was a core of Kalasha settlements in Shishi Kuh, in the main valley, in Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh, who resisted conversion for many centuries and formed for a long time a most significant component of the Kalasha community. It is essential to keep these long-resisting Kalasha communities well distinct from the vague memories still surviving in oral tradition about the other ancient Kalasha settlements in Southern Chitral.

But there is one area within this group of communities, which, as we have seen, turns out to be particularly interesting. Jinjeret Kuh and Urtsun are valleys of very recent conversion. We know from Morgenstierne that Urtsun was still mostly unconverted when he visited it at the end of August 1929 (Morgenstierne 1932: 45) and, though he does not mention it, the same was probably true of Jinjeret Kuh. The two valleys have been progressively converted some time between 1910-20 and 1940, and though few are willing to admit it, there are obviously several people still living who were not Muslims at their birth. Urtsun had a peculiar culture of its own, quite



different not only from that of Rumbur and Bumburet, but also from that of Birir, which, as many have remarked, has several distinctive characters of its own. The culture of Urtsun had many influences from Bashgal, not only because of geographical proximity, but also because a lineage of Kam people, who preserved their language and culture, had been living there for generations (7).

Jinjeret Kuh, on the other hand, was once to all effects a fourth valley of the Kalashgum, and it may be described as a veritable 'twin' of Birir, both in physical aspect and in cultural characteristics. Its language as well, contrary to Morgenstierne's above-mentioned belief, is almost identical to that of Birir.

Unlike the other settlements visited by us, many significant memories of the pre-Muslim past are still alive (and burning) in Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh, and the Kalasha language is still known and used by people of all ages, including children, though there is the clearly stated intention of abandoning it in favour of Khowar. Since their position is therefore quite different from the other areas visited by us, Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh shall be treated in separate articles, which form the second and third part of the present report.

### *The Eastern Area*

Besides Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh, all the other settlements of the main valley and of the Eastern tributaries can be grouped in what we may call Eastern Area of the Kalasha culture.

This area is fairly homogeneous from a linguistic point of view, though not entirely. All the villages of the main valley and Shishi Kuh, with the exception of Birga, belong to what can probably be identified as the Eastern dialect of Kalashamun (which is called Kalashamandr in this variant). Morgenstierne, as already noted, had studied this dialect mainly through materials obtained from Wazir Ali Shah, and had classified it as a variety of the Southern dialect of Urtsun. Though we are not trained linguists, it seems to us that since there are significant differences between the language of all these communities and that of Urtsun, it is better, if only for convenience, to keep them separate.

The exception of Birga is surprising because the language spoken there is clearly identical to that of Rumbur and Bumburet, i.e. the classical form of what Morgenstierne called Northern Kalasha. Neither in Shishi Kuh nor in Kalashgum have we found any oral tradition at all to explain the presence of this dialect in the eastern valley.

The known distribution of Kalasha dialects is therefore the one illustrated by the map in fig. 2.

(7) Another clan had migrated to Urtsun — as we shall see in the second section of our report (Aug. Cacopardo 1991) — from Waigal, but its members have abandoned the language of their homeland to adopt Kalashamun.

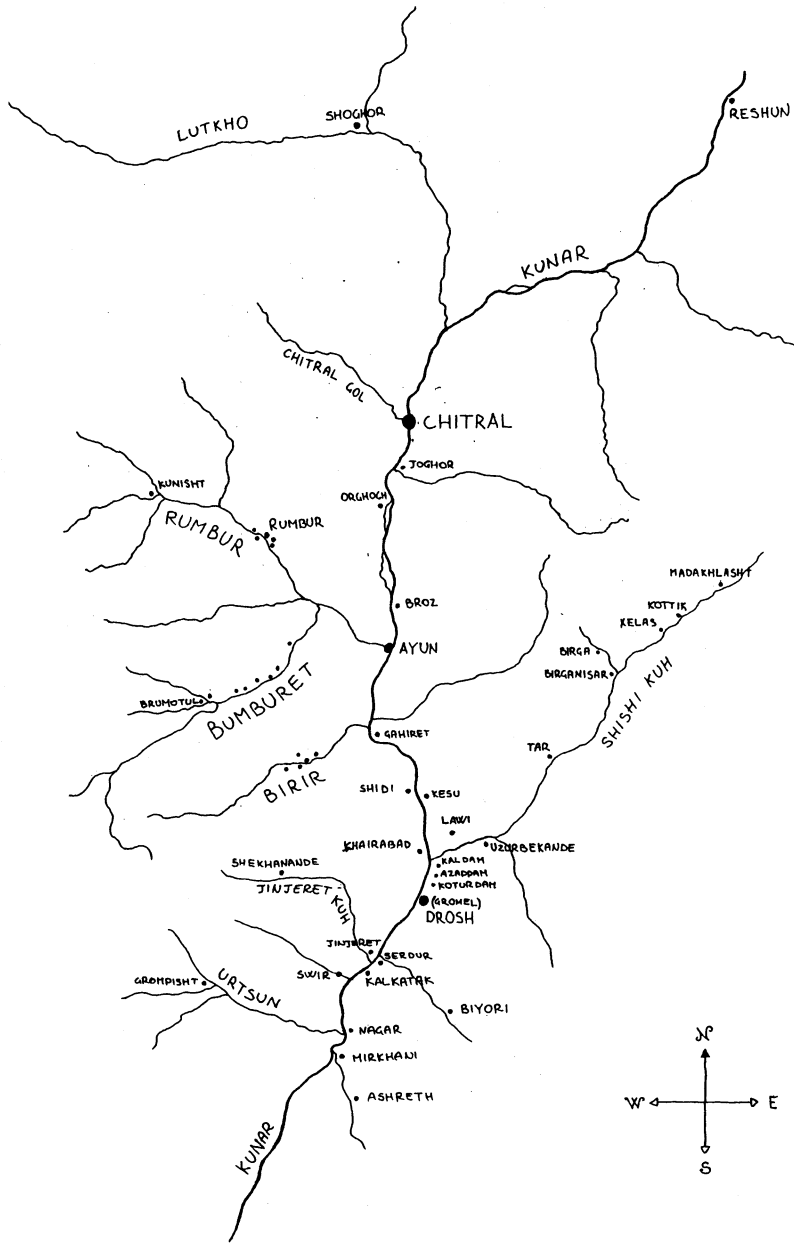


Fig. 1 - Sketch map of southern Chitral.

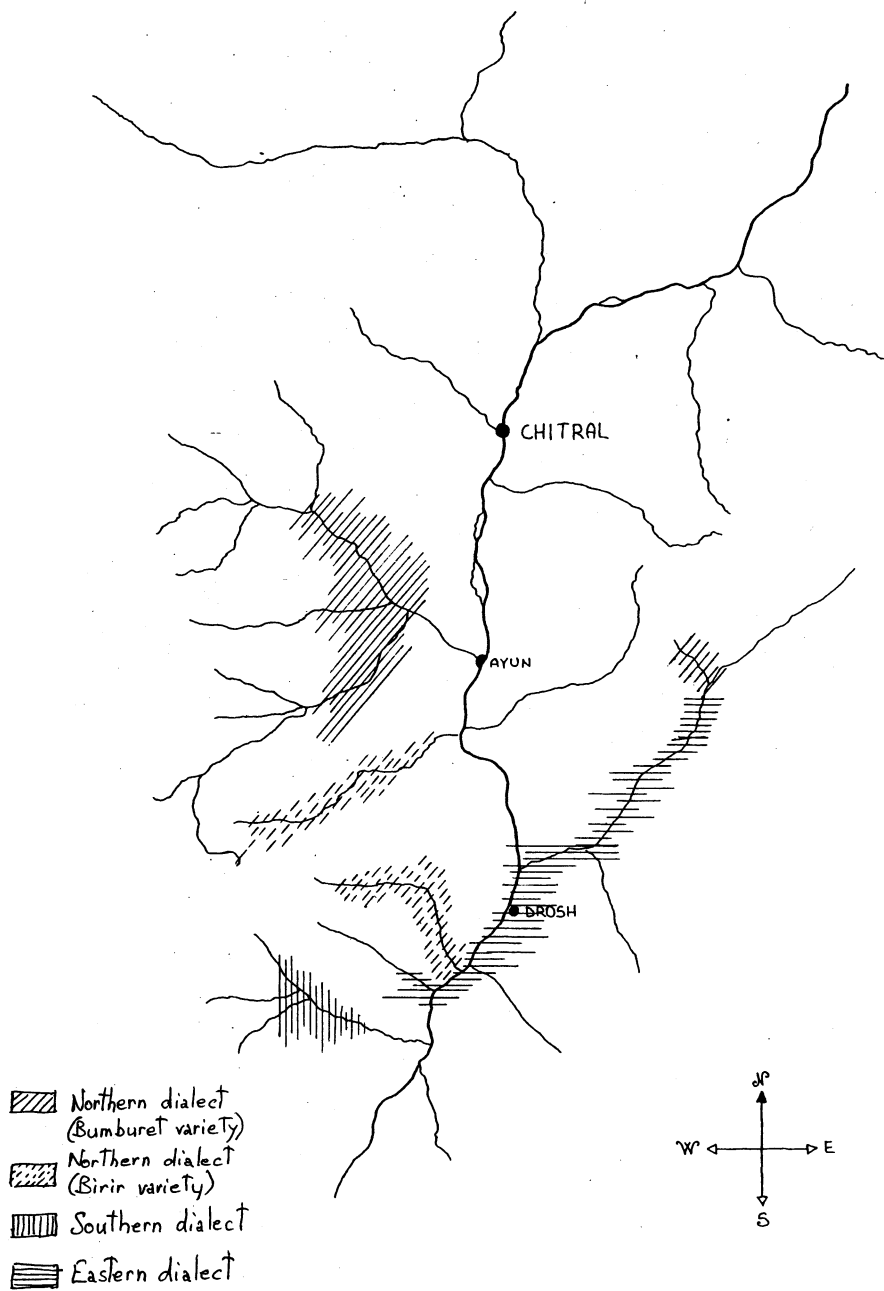


Fig. 2 - Geographical distribution of Kalasha dialects. Sketch map.

But what about the present knowledge and use of the Kalasha language in this Eastern area? On first inquiry the people universally tend to deny it is ever being used nowadays. Upon more careful investigation, it becomes apparent, however, that there are a few old couples in each village who tend to use it commonly in private conversation within their homes, while even those who refuse to employ it find it a convenient means of keeping secrets away from the ears of children.

From the information we have collected, despite elements of uncertainty due to the reticences mentioned earlier, it appears that Kalashamun remained the currently spoken language in all these villages at least until the formation of Pakistan in 1947. It must be emphasized that advent of independence has been, in the history of Chitral, a much more significant landmark than contact with the West at the advent of the British. It was only then that the rule of the Mehtars (who maintained a nominal lordship until 1972) actually came to an end, since, with their system of indirect rule, the British had left all internal matters concerning the government of Chitral in the hands of its traditional princes (Afzal Khan 1975: 13-23). The end of their rule, which became definitive in 1950 when the administration was taken over by the Government of Pakistan, was perceived as a profound revolution marking the termination of an era and the eclipse of a whole aristocracy. The atmosphere surrounding this change must have been very similar to that of Sicily at the time of Italy's unification, so masterfully described by Tomasi di Lampedusa in his novel *The Leopard*.

Enthusiastically supported by the great majority of the population, the independence of Pakistan brought about a thrust of liberation in which many traces of an unpleasant past of oppression had to be suppressed. The resolution to abandon the use of Kalasha language, according to a majority of our informants, was part of this move.

The disappearance of a language, however, even with the most determined intentions of its speakers, cannot be a matter of minutes. Kalashamun kept being used for quite a long time, certainly until the fifties and in some places, apparently, until the early seventies. Parents, like a new wave of immigrants in America trying to erase any trace of their difference, were careful not to teach the language to their children, though inevitably still often using it themselves. But for people born in the thirties and earlier, that was their mother tongue and, however perfect their knowledge of Khowar, a distinct Kalasha accent can still be perceived in their speech.

Generally speaking, therefore, the following points are true of all the Eastern area:

1) actual use of Kalasha language is nowadays quite sporadic and limited to people above 55 or 60 years of age;

2) active knowledge, i.e. ability to speak the language, though quite difficult to ascertain since most refuse to admit it, seems to be widespread and common to all elderly people above the same age limit as well as many younger ones;

3) passive knowledge, i.e. comprehension of the language, is quite generalized, and we have found that even youngsters are often able to understand most of a Kalashamun conversation; this, of course, is also due to the proximity of the language to Khowar.

Altogether, it is quite certain that all the communities we have visited, and probably some of the other lesser settlements mentioned earlier, have kept using Kalashamun as their mother tongue for generations after conversion to Islam.

The exact dating of this conversion has been quite difficult to establish, since, for obvious reasons, most informants tended to place it in some immemorably distant past. Biddulph mentions, together with 'Jinjuret', various settlements of the Eastern area whose inhabitants 'have become Mahommedans, though in other respects they adhere to their ancient customs' (1880: 64). Since this is certainly untrue of Jinjeret Kuh, the statement leaves much to be doubted. However, it seems not unlikely that some variable admixture of Muslim and pre-Muslim practices may have prevailed in the Eastern area for some time after 'conversion'. Schomberg, on the other hand, states that the people of Kalasha descent living in Drosh had been converted 'two or three generations' before his visit (1938: 211).

Elements collected in this research point to the fact that conversion in the Eastern area must have started in the second half of the 18th century to be completed some time before 1900. The conversion of Shishi Kuh is generally ascribed to the proselytizing work of Babaji, a *buzurug* (Muslim holy man) from Birga, son of non-Muslim parents, whose *ziarat* (grave sanctuary) is still revered in his native land. The figure of Babaji is some times also connected with the islamization of the other communities of the Eastern area.

Memories of the pre-Muslim past are therefore very scanty in all this area. People tend to exhibit no knowledge at all about deities, myths, rituals, cyclic celebrations and behaviour models of the past. Only some faint memories remain about the location of holy places and abandoned villages. This oblivion is clearly not due to the lapse of time, which after all is not that long. All this information was certainly within reach of the parents and grandparents of many living people. The point is that, for the same reasons mentioned above, there has been a determination *not* to transmit the memory of this cultural heritage, which is therefore apparently lost. It may be, that with a much longer, patient and tactful inquiry on the field, after gaining the people's full confidence, whatever of these memories is still concealed behind the wall of bitterness and shame might be drawn to the light. It wouldn't be surprising however to find that, even so, there is nothing left to record.

The last area we have tried to investigate is the survival of the Kalasha kinship system and of related genealogical memory. Given what we have said earlier about the adoption of Chitrali culture, it is not surprising that nothing is left of the Kalasha system of patrilineal lineage exogamy. Once again, comparison with Nuristan is significant. In Nuristan, genealogical memory has remained as deep and relevant as in the pre-islamic past, and the implications of kinship as far as mutual support and exogamy are concerned are largely unchanged (Jones 1974: 118-63).

Among these people, on the contrary, the depth of genealogical memory we have recorded varies only from two to six or seven generations above the informant. In very few instances, moreover, has any informant admitted the knowledge of a pre-

islamic ancestor's name. The oblivion of genealogy is therefore clearly connected not only with the loss of functional relevance of kinship, but with the determination to erase all traces of the pre-islamic past and of difference from the Kho. Symptomatically, we have also found only sparse traces in the Eastern area of the well known myth of the Quraish origin of the non-Muslim people of the area (Robertson 1974: 158; Dupree 1974: XVIII), which, on the contrary, is quite rooted in Urtsun, Jinjeret Kuh and even Birir.

We shall return on the problem of the origins of the Kalasha and related myths in the third and last part of this study. For now, having drawn this general picture of the situation, we shall proceed to examine the results of our investigation in the single communities we have visited, which shall be treated in detail one by one.

### *Gromel*

Gromel is one of the seven villages composing the town of Drosh, the main settlement of the Southern part of Chitral District, and centre of the Drosh *Tabsil* (an administrative subdivision of the District). The other villages of Drosh, called Khorandok, Guru, Langa, Datkhanduri, Alian and Bazar, are all inhabited by Kho people, except the last, which spreads along the main road and is mainly occupied by immigrated Pathan.

The village of Gromel has never been mentioned in the literature on the Kalasha. However, when Schomberg and Wazir Ali Shah mention Drosh among the Kalasha speaking or 'Kalasha dominated' settlements of Southern Chitral, they obviously refer to Gromel, and, possibly, to nearby hamlets such as Azurdam, Kaldam and Azaddam.

The position of this village is that of a typical Kalasha settlement: it is perched on the side of the valley just above the fields and below the lower reaches of the evergreen oak forest, which happens to be almost totally wiped out by now in this particular place (fig. 3). This position is typical of old Kalasha villages and culturally significant. Gromel is one of the few villages of the Eastern Kalasha area which have maintained their original location: this is proved by the fact that one of the points on which all informants have agreed is that the present mosque, located right in the centre of the village, rises on the spot where 'an old pre-islamic temple' used to be. Our informants were not able to give any detail about the nature of this temple, but the position in the middle of the village indicates, beyond any reasonable doubt, that it must have been the equivalent of what is called *Ĵ'ęstak han* in Rumbur and Bumboret (Schomberg 1938: 47-48; Siiger 1956: 16-17; Snoy 1959: 527-28; Aug. Cacopardo 1974: 59-65; Jones & Parkes 1984), and *rikh'ini* in Birir. We have not found other memories about the existence, the use or the name of this kind of building in any other place of the Eastern area <sup>(8)</sup>. This location is one of those that could be worthy

<sup>(8)</sup> The British ethnographer Peter Parkes states that 'material remains' of buildings similar to a



Fig. 3 - The main Kunar valley seen from Lawi, with the area of Drosh at center. To the left, in the background, a spot of vegetation above Drosh marks the village of Gromel. Unlike the villages of the unconverted Kalasha, that appear from a distance as a tight cluster of terraced houses, the villages of the converted Kalasha of the Eastern area have the appearance of all Kho settlements: a loose spread of vegetation, mainly fruit trees, entirely covers the spacious houses with their walled courts.

of excavation in the future. (For a comparison between the structure of the *Ĵ'eṣṭak han* and that of Chitrali mosques, see Scerrato 1984).

Another site whose location was remembered by our informants is that of the *baš'ali* which they significantly designated with the Chitrali name *bašal'eni*. Informants agreed about the location of one *baš'ali* near an irrigation channel running below the village, while there was disagreement about the existence of a second *baš'ali* on the bottom of the Drosh Gol some distance to the south. In both cases, indications agree with Kalasha tradition, which always locates the *baš'ali*, considered a very *pr'aghata* (impure) place, close to the water and below the villages.

There are many indications that Gromel must have been one of the most ancient settlements in the area. Its elevated position, and the fact that it is the only Kalasha

*Ĵ'eṣṭak han* 'are still partially evident' in the main Chitral valley (Jones & Parkes 1984: 1166) and that 'remains of decorated clan-house pillars' have been found in Ayun and Broz (Parkes 1983: 16). Despite our repeated inquiries, we could detect no trace of such findings.

one of the seven villages of Drosh town, seem to indicate that it must have been the oldest section of Drosh.

We have also recorded a legend in the village of Uzurbekande, which was not known in Gromel, according to which Lawi, Birga, Kelas, Uzurbekande, Kalkatak and Suwir (i.e. all the relevant settlements of the Eastern area) were founded by six brothers who were born in Gromel some 20 generations ago. Though the historical authenticity of this legend is definitely doubtful, it is an indication not only of the feeling of common identity of the Eastern area, but also of the possible seniority of the Gromel settlement. The former relevance of Gromel in the Eastern Kalasha area is also proved by the fact that, together with Lawi and Suwir, it is one of the few villages that was constantly mentioned by all the informants whom we asked about present-day Kalashamun-speaking settlements.

Gromel has now about 55 households, the great majority of which are of Kalasha descent, with a few families of recently immigrated Kho. It is the first village we have visited. Despite many attempts, we were only able to work with one Kalasha informant, who started out by denying altogether that he could speak Kalashamun. He said that the last one in his family who spoke the language was his grandfather and that all memories of the Kalasha past were lost to him. This seemed to agree with Schomberg's information. After almost two hours of conversation in Khowar, however, when we were about to part, I decided to address him in Kalashamun. To which, to my surprise, he answered in a most fluent language that, though sometimes hard for me to understand, was clearly recognizable as the dialect recorded by Morgenstierne from Lawi and Suwir.

He thus subsequently admitted that Kalashamun was spoken in his family when he was a child. According to one Kho informant who has lived in Gromel for forty years, however, there are at least 60 or 70 elderly people in the village who know the language just as well. This Kho informant stated that they have stopped using the language some 25 years ago, i.e. in the mid-fifties, thus contradicting Schomberg's statement about the abandonment of the language.

The genealogical memory of our Kalasha informant did not go beyond the generation of his great grand-father and was horizontally quite poor. He stated that his family had become Muslim five or six generations ago, which of course is no proof to any hypothesis.

Concerning the Kalasha past, all he was able to remember (besides the location of the buildings mentioned above) was that they used to make wine, and that the village was founded by a man called Grambir in an immemorably distant past.

Being only ten minutes walk from the bazar, Gromel is heavily influenced by the embryonically urbanized culture of Drosh town. The resistance against the old language seems to be particularly strong here and also from an economic point of view there seems to be a definite shift from goat-herding to agriculture since the number of animals owned by the villagers has had a sharp decline in the course of this century. The emphasis on agriculture rather than animal husbandry is typical of Kho culture as opposed to Kalasha.





Fig. 4 - A close up of Mohammad Seyid, a Rayat from Kalkatak.

### *Kalkatak*

The village of Kalkatak is located in the main valley on a rather spectacular cliff overhanging the left bank of the river between Drosh and Mirkhani. It is almost opposite Suwir, which is some distance from the right bank and a little further south. Though there is no bridge at this point, the two villages are closely related from a linguistic and cultural point of view.

Kalkatak is not recorded by Biddulph among Kalashamun-speaking settlements, nor does Schomberg, who mentions its name, say anything about its language. As we have seen, however, it is included in Gurdon's list and a sample of its language was studied by Morgenstierne.

The village has now about 110 households almost entirely of Kalasha descent. The fact that Gurdon lists only 16 families of Kalasha language is not surprising. All villages in the area have considerably increased the number of residence units due to a shift from extended to nuclear family coupled with a significant increase in population — and, of course, the much emphasized reticence to admit Kalasha descentance must also have played a role in Gurdon's data. The present size of Kalkatak, at any rate, is similar to that of Rumbur, where Gurdon recorded only 20 Kalasha families in 1904 (for the demography of Rumbur until the early seventies, see Alb. Cacopardo 1974: XCV-CXII and Parkes 1983: 23-31).

There are some peculiarities that distinguish Kalkatak from the rest of the Eastern area. In the first place, its inhabitants have not adopted Khowar to substitute Kalasha, but Palula, the Shina-related language of Asuret, Mirkhani and Biyori. This shows, beyond any doubt, that the reason for abandoning the language is not, as some of our informants claimed, the desire to acquire a more widespread idiom like Khowar, since Palula is certainly not more widely spoken than Kalashamun: the non-Muslim connections of the language are clearly the cause of its disappearance.

In the second place, Kalkatak paradoxically seems to be, despite its position very close to the paved road, the village that has kept the living use of Kalashamun for the longest time. We have met an elementary school teacher of Kho descent, aged about forty, who could speak Kalashamun having learnt it from his Kalasha neighbours. According to him, the use of the language has been entirely abandoned only some ten years ago, i.e. just before 1980. This seems confirmed by the fact that our youngest informant, who was not older than 25, could speak the language fairly well, though not quite fluently.

Besides this man, we have met three other people who could speak perfect Kalashamun in Kalkatak. The oldest (one Mohammad Seyid, who claimed to be 90) was quite an interesting character, since he was, of all our informants, the one we have found most attached to the use of the old language. He spoke openly against the community's determination to abandon it and was known to provocatively address the other villagers in Kalashamun, often rebuking them for repudiating their ancestors' tongue. He normally used Kalashamun with our other informants and with his wife, though not with his own son. This was the first time we heard about the living use of Kalashamun in the Eastern area, which is, as we have seen, a fairly rare phenomenon. The *knowledge* of the language is another matter, and altogether it seems quite likely that more than a hundred people are able to speak good Kalashamun in Kalkatak, while many dozens more understand it and can make themselves understood.

Concerning the date of conversion, we have had statements varying from four to ten generations ago.

Memories of the pre-islamic past seemed altogether lost. Our informants even claimed to ignore the meaning of the word *bašal'eni*, which is well known to many Chitralis. The only name of a pre-Muslim ancestor remembered was that of a man named Dhondi, who lived in a place called Dhondigal some miles north of Kalkatak, where some pre-islamic ruins were said to be still extant. I have subsequently visited this place finding what appeared to be the ruins of an isolated goat-shed that did not seem particularly ancient.

We have also inquired about the lineages existing in Kalkatak. To understand the answer it must be made clear that the word currently used by the Kalasha to indicate their own lineages is *kam*, a Chitrali word borrowed from Persian. Whereas the entire existence of the unconverted Kalasha revolves around their lineage membership, in Chitral, though many lineages are recognized, especially among higher ranking people, the social and economic functions of this unit are very limited, given the absence of

an exogamic rule and, in practice, of mutual support obligations. The word *kam* is loosely employed to indicate either a kinship group, or a wider local community with a common heritage, or a nationality identified by language, such as Pathan, Gujur, Dangarik and so on, or even to emphasize the national identity of modern multinational states like Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Thus when we enquired about the *kam*, the answer we got was that there are two in Kalkatak, the Rayat and the Darkhan. These two groups, however, have nothing to do with lineages, but they indicate specific hereditary positions in the administrative system of the Mehtars' state. The Rayat were obliged in the past to pay forced labour (*begar*) to the Mehtar, which consisted in cutting wood, carrying loads, doing household work in the palace and so on, while the Darkhan enjoyed the privilege of being exempted from the more menial kinds of work <sup>(9)</sup>. Of the villages we visited in the Eastern area, the Darkhan were present only in Kalkatak and Gromori (Suwir), the Rayat everywhere. There are now some 60 families of Darkhan in Kalkatak and 50 of Rayat.

From the economic point of view Kalkatak is also shifting towards agriculture. The abandonment of animal husbandry has recently been accelerated by the cutting of entire areas of evergreen oak forest (which was a most important pasture for the goats) by the Afghan refugees. The presence of a huge camp with about ten thousand inhabitants just south of Kalkatak has heavily influenced, in this and other ways, the life of the village.

### *Suwir*

Still at the time of Morgenstierne's visit in 1929 (Morgenstierne 1932: 51), the Kalasha valleys were actually five, all to the West of the main Kunar valley: Rumbur, Bumburet, Birir, Jinjeret Kuh and Urtsun. Suwir is located at the mouth of a sixth, smaller valley that penetrates between Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh to the foot of the range that marks the border with Afghanistan. Though this valley is not permanently inhabited, its fields and pastures have always belonged to the Suwir community, until, in very recent times, they have been partly occupied by Gujur (for the presence of these people in the Hindu Kush area, see Robertson 1894: 103, 298, 300; Edelberg

<sup>(9)</sup> Since the notions we could collect on this subject on the field appeared rather conflicting, Prof. Karl Jettmar has kindly provided us with the following information: 'The terms Rayat and Darkhan indicate categories that were generally employed in the whole administrative system of Chitral. They refer to people who lived and worked on land that was reserved to the dynasty or the person of the ruler. When the Kalasha were subdued, they were included in these long standing categories as pagans with particularly unfavourable conditions. This was not the traditional "state land" occupied by the Boldoyu. For the supervision and the delivery of the revenue, there was a distinct group of officials, who in turn made use of native supervisors, as is common in every system of forced labour [...]. The position granted to these people was not, however, particularly high. The Darkhan maintained the duty of carrying big crates and drums'.

& Jones 1979: 100-101). Thus Suwir was once, in a way, the sixth Kalasha valley on the right of the Kunar.

Due to its location in the main valley, however, the village has always been under the influence of the Eastern area of Kalasha culture, and its language, as we have seen, is identical to that of Kalkatak. Suwir is therefore the only Eastern dialect settlement on the west side of the valley and, thanks to its position, it has always functioned as a hinge between the various subcultures of the Kalasha world, entertaining especially intense relationships with Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh. These relations are particularly evident today, since the jeepable road to Urtsun cuts right across the village.

Suwir is composed of two separate settlements, whose ancient Kalasha names (which tend to be abandoned now) were Pashkuroni and Gromori. The former, to the north, has now 62 houses, the latter, to the south, 42.

Concerning the time of conversion, we have again received conflicting information. According to one informant from Paskuroni, however, his own village was converted in the tenth generation above the youngest living one, Gromori in the sixth. He mentioned frequent violent conflicts between the two in the time when Gromori was still unconverted.

The language seems to have been abandoned somewhat earlier than in Kalkatak. We have heard from one informant who left the village in 1939 to serve in the army that everybody spoke Kalashamun when he left, while they all spoke Khowar when he returned in 1956. There are apparently still several old people, especially women, who currently use the old language, but it seems clear that the generation born after 1947 has not been brought up to speak Kalashamun.

Here again few memories of the pre-islamic past were admitted, but, thanks to a happy incident, we have been able to establish the location of the old *maṇḍaujau*, the Kalasha cemetery. Only a week before our arrival, while excavating a tomb, some villagers had unearthed an old burial in which they had found, associated with a complete skeleton, three bracelets and one *gar'äi*, a particular type of Kalasha necklace. All objects were in bronze, testifying their antiquity, because, while bracelets of this material are still used by Kalasha women, bronze *gar'äi* have been entirely substituted by silver *gr'iṅga*, a similar, but more valuable, kind of ornament. One of the bracelets, in particular, is especially interesting, since it is engraved with the typically Kalasha *č'ižin čot*, the design of the sacred pine that Kalasha still trace on the walls of the *ĵ'eštak han* during the night of Kutramu, part of the winter rituals of Chaumos (Loude 1984: 229; Aug. Cacopardo 1988: 321-22; Wutt 1976: 155, 168). The people said that such findings are frequent in that area, and they stated that in Kalasha times the village of Gromori was not where it now stands but above the site of this burial, a little further up valley. This burial is located about one hundred meters directly to the south of the new elementary school. The bronze objects are the first reported archaeological findings of undisputable Kalasha origin (fig. 5).

In Gromori we have collected from one informant, Hajji Abdur Rahim Ullah, a rather extensive genealogy which was said to include all the present inhabitants of

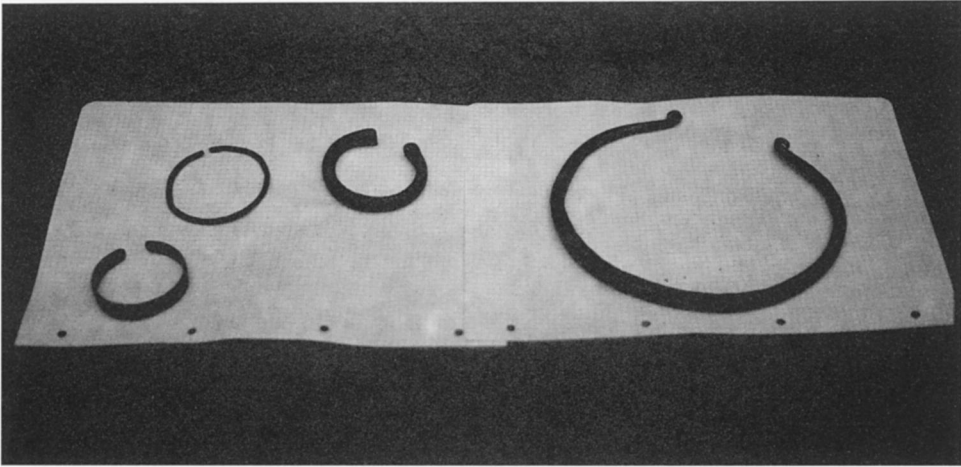


Fig. 5 - The bronze objects found in Gromori (Suwir). To the right, a *gar'äi*, a bronze neck-band no longer in use among present day Kalasha, but clearly a less wealthy version of the silver torque (*r'ua gr'iŋga*) worn today by many Kalasha women for festivities and once a symbol of rank. Continuing from right to left: the *bozg'ulu* bracelet with the *č'izim coŋ*, the pattern of the sacred pine tree; a common *bangl'e* bracelet; another type of *bozg'ulu*, still worn by many Kalasha women today.

the hamlet, all belonging to the Darkhan group. This genealogy, however, extended only to the fifth generation above the informant's. According to Hajji Abdur Rahim Ullah, even the earliest ancestor he remembered, one Hassan Beg, was already converted to Islam. This, however, conflicts not only with the information from Pashkuroni, but also from other villages of the Eastern area.

The origin of the Darkhan of Suwir, and the reason for their privileged position, were explained by Rahim Ullah in connection with an historical episode.

Moghul Beg, great-grandfather of our informant, had fled to Saukana, in the area of Peshawar, to escape the mistreatments of Mehtar Khairullah of the Khushwaqte family (Biddulph 1986: 151-53; Schomberg 1935: 255 ff.). There he heard that the dispossessed Mehtar of the Kator family had retreated to Chukiatan, in the Dir district, to prepare revenge. He started out to meet him and, on the way, he captured in Arandu a falcon, which in those days (since there were no guns, the Hajji explained) were much appreciated to be used in hunting. He thus sent the falcon to the Kator, who, pleased with the gift, received him and planned with him to kill Khairullah, who had just left for an expedition to Bashgal. Kator gave Moghul Beg a charter that stated that if he ever would become the ruler, he would be exempt from *begar* and obliged only to provide the royal family every year with one falcon, as excellent as the original one. Thus, upon his return, Khairullah was ambushed in Urtsun by Moghul Beg, who killed him.

Since the Suwir Darkhan have continued till very recent times to provide the

Mehtar's family with falcons, the story is likely to be at least partially true — though with some adjustments.

The Kator ruler in question was none other than Mohtaram Shah II who actually spent more than 20 years in exile in Dir (Schomberg 1938: 266-67) while Khairullah, previously ruler of Mastuj, held his throne. According to Wazir Ali Shah (1974a: 24), 'during the 1760's, Mehtar Khairullah [...] led an expedition against the Kams [Nuristani Kafirs] to punish them for supporting ex-Mehtar Mohtaram Shah Katur of Chitral against him. On his return from the expedition however he was ambushed near Urtsun by an Afghan force supporting Katur and killed in fighting'. A fuller account of this episode is given by Jettmar (1986: 15).

It may well be that a Kalasha from Suwir took part in the plot against Khairullah. What may be doubted is that he was only the great-grandfather of our informant, since the lapse of time seems a bit too long. The oblivion of one or two generations in this kind of genealogies is obviously a fairly common phenomenon. What can further be doubted, however, is that the person in question, and his ascendants, were already Muslims. This has been expressly denied by another informant from Lawi, who also knew this story and stated that the man who gave the falcon was indeed from Suwir, but a non-Muslim by the name of Khoshiak. Once again, there is little to help us in establishing the time of conversion.

According to Rahim Ullah, it was after this episode that Moghul Beg's descendants were styled Darkhan by the Mehtar. He also said that the Kalkatak Darkhan were not relatives of those from Suwir, but participated in the same plot.

One more discovery in Suwir was that of an old Kalasha building, the only one surviving the reconstruction of the village. This we found in Pashkuroi, the other section of Suwir, which has not changed location since pre-Muslim times. It is a three storied tower of which only the first two stories remain (fig. 6). These buildings are called *koṭ* or *koṭ'ik* in Kalasha, and structures of similar kind were once numerous not only in Kalasha territory, but also in Nuristan (Edelberg 1974: pl. 10; Robertson 1974: 493) and the rest of Chitral. The one in Pashkuroi is one of the six *koṭ* we have discovered in the converted Kalasha areas, while only one survives in the present unconverted valleys, in the village of Brun in Bumburet.

The *koṭ* in Pashkuroi was the only one remaining of three, which stood very close in an area of some 30 by 30 meters, disposed like the three apexes of an L, just like the ones still standing in Jinjeret Kuh. According to the owner of the surviving one, they belonged to three brothers named Lachkar Shah, Mirza Ali Shah and Balajon Shah, who lived in pre-islamic times, and from whom all the villagers are descended. He did not, however, recall the genealogy. Each tower contained, dug in the floor of the bottom storey, nine storage cells, belonging three each to nine sons of the three original brothers. In kinship, it is a rule that when things get too symmetrical, they are bound to be entirely mythical. The nature of these buildings shall be discussed in the third section of this report, dedicated to Jinjeret Kuh.

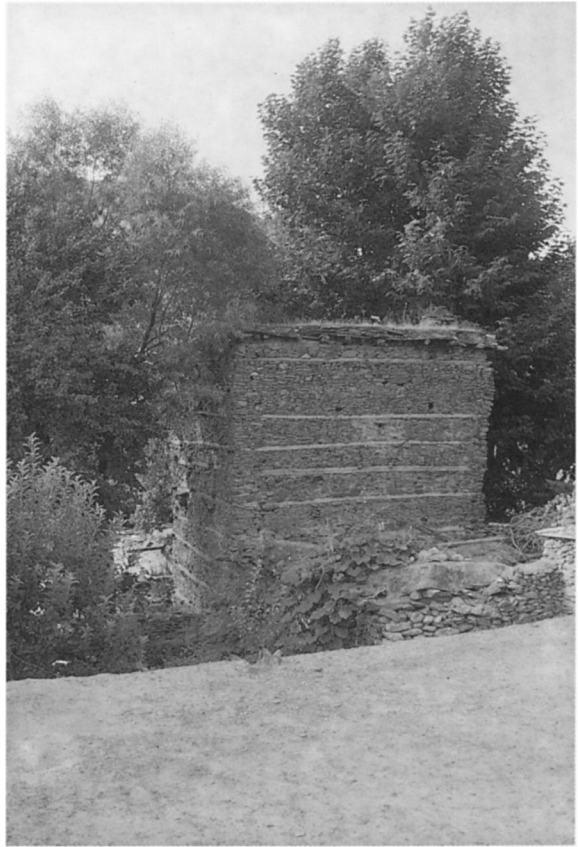


Fig. 6 - The *kot* in Pashkuroni. The trees crowding around it have been planted, in the Kho style, after conversion.

### *Lawi*

The village of Lawi is located close to the mouth of the Shishi Kuh on the northern (right) side of the valley, in a rather elevated position, at least one hundred meters above the river. Seen from Drosh, it appears in the distance as a green patch of trees on an otherwise desert mountain side (fig. 7).

Lawi is also divided in two sections, respectively called Rayatande (the village of the Rayat) and Khoande (the Kho village). The former, with some 70 houses, is entirely inhabited by Kalasha of the Rayat group, while the latter has 28 houses of a kam called Samarkande, 8 houses of a purely Kho kam called Madruze (which is also present in Ayun), and two houses of Sangallie (see Biddulph 1976: 62-63; Afzal Khan 1975: 85-86; Schomberg 1938: 213-14) of the Kator family. It seems that the inhabitants of the two sections do not intermarry.

The present site of Lawi is said to have been first occupied by the Samarkande, who are the descendants of one Jalaluddin Bukhari, who first came from the area of



Fig. 7 - The village of Lawi.

Samarkanda to settle in Khurkashande, just south of Chitral Bazar. It was his son Qafar Shah who received from the Mehtar the land at Lawi and built the irrigation channels to create the present fields. In the remembered genealogy of the Samarkande, Qafar Shah is situated in the fourth generation above the living elders, but he may have lived earlier than that.

The Kalasha moved to Lawi only later, but it is difficult to establish when and under what circumstances. Their original home is unanimously said to have been a village called Baznak, now disappeared, located in the main valley just north of the mouth of the Shishi Kuh. According to one tradition, they first moved from there to another place called Malosh, a few hundred meters to the west of Lawi, and then from there to the present village. According to another tradition, however, they moved directly from Baznak to Lawi only at the time of the living elders's great-grandfathers.

Though again we received conflicting information about the time of conversion to Islam, this was unanimously credited in Lawi to the proselytising work of Babaji, the holy man from Birga mentioned earlier. Now, according to the official histories of Chitral, Babaji returned to Shishi Kuh from Peshawar, where he had studied Islam, in 1769, when he started his missionary work which resulted in the conversion of Shishi Kuh. This seems to agree with one Kalasha genealogy we recorded from Lawi, where the pre-Muslim ancestor, by the name of Ghana Gumbi, is situated in the seventh generation above our elderly informant (fig. 8).



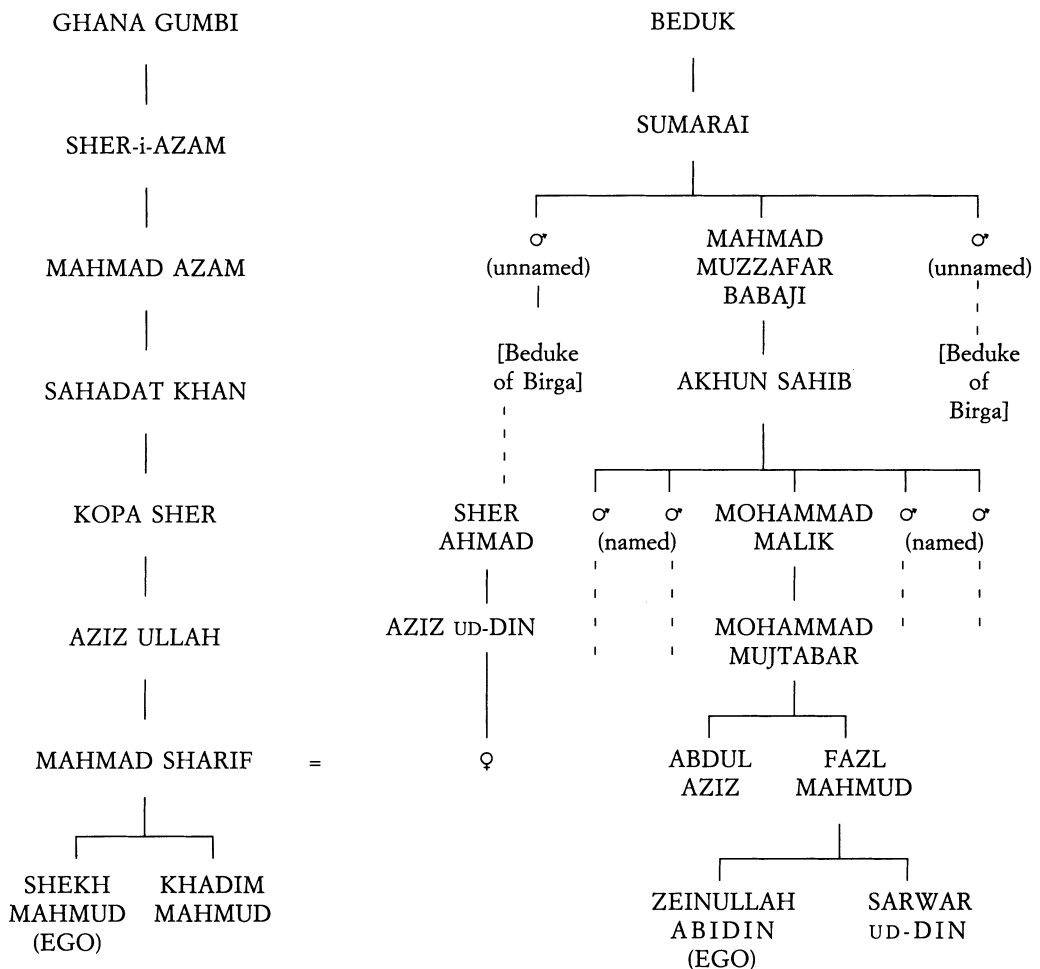


Fig. 8 - The linear genealogy of the Beduke of Birga and Khairabad according to Zeinullah Abidin from Khairabad, cognatically related to the descendance of Ghana Gumbi of Lawi, as recalled by Shekh Mahmud from Lawi. The Beduke 'lineage' is not exogamic.

It conflicts, however, with information from one Samarkande informant, Mir Mukharram Shah, according to whom his great-grandfather Jamil Shah was invited to attend a Kalasha festival in Uzurbekande. As we shall see, the conversion was probably a slow process that took place over a number of decades.

The Kalasha of Rayatande are now divided in five groups, which, though identified with the term *kam*, have certainly nothing to do with the exogamous lineages of pre-Islamic times. Their names are Kotekye, Shakhdureye, Duroye, Dashmane, Chirduo. Since we could not obtain any genealogy of these groups, it is not even clear whether they are actual descent groups. At any rate, they are not exogamic and seem to have little functional relevance in the social life of the people.

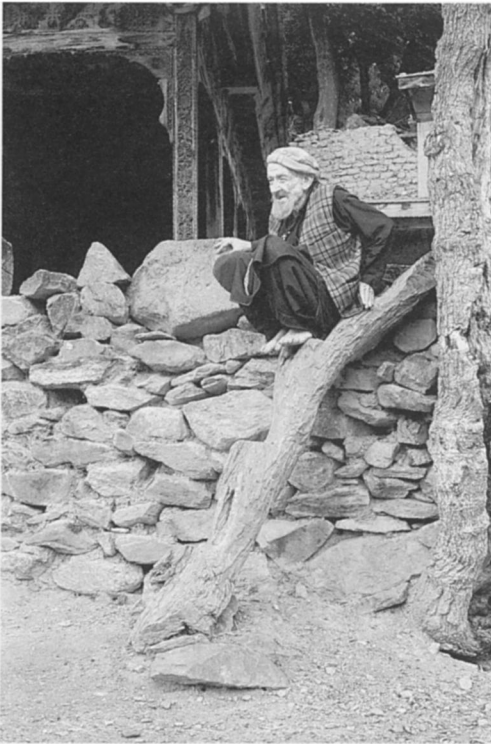


Fig. 9 - Our Kalasha informant Shakhirullah from Lawi sitting on an old Kalasha-style ladder (*šit*). In the background, the mosque of Rayatande.

Like most other settlements in Lower Chitral, the number of houses in Lawi seems to have grown considerably during this century. According to one estimate, there were little over 20 houses in Rayatande in the early decades of the century, which agrees with Gurdon's data.

Lawi seems to be one of the villages where knowledge of Kalashamun is most widespread. The language was gradually abandoned here between 1950 and 1965, and all elderly people in the village are said to have knowledge of it.

Since the people of Kalasha descent have most likely moved to Lawi only after conversion, there is no memory of pre-islamic sites in the village, nor could we collect any information about myths or rites of the past.

### *Uzurbekande*

This is one of the villages which entirely escaped Gurdon's and Morgenstierne's attention. It has now some forty households, only a couple of which are of immigrants, while the rest are all of Kalasha descent.



Fig. 10 - A view of Shishi Kuh looking down valley from Uzurbekande. The valley has been predominantly deprived of its hollyoak forests, but these have been preserved in a few areas, like here on the left hillside.

In Uzurbekande we witness a case in which the village has been moved from a typically Kalasha to a typically Kho position. The present village is on the bottom of the valley along the stream, while the previous settlement, according to our informants, was located some way up the mountain side on the left (south) bank of the watercourse. The villagers stated that traces of old buildings are often found when digging in the fields that now occupy the site. Though there was no indication of the time when this change of location took place, it seems most likely that it was associated with conversion, like we have seen elsewhere.

Concerning the use of the language, the situation seemed similar to that of the other villages. We have met a couple of people above sixty who could speak very fluently the Eastern dialect, and this is most likely true of all the villagers of their age. We have also met one young person, some thirty years old, who declared at first that he knew no Kalashamun at all, but subsequently showed a perfect passive knowledge of the language when he translated for our Kho guide the content of a piece of Kalasha conversation, and finally broke into a particularly heated dialogue exhibiting a perfectly pure, though not exactly fluent, Kalashamun. Here, like elsewhere, the people stated that the language had been abandoned at the time of Pakistan's independence.

The people in Uzurbekande confirmed the fact that the village was converted, like the rest of the Eastern area, by Babaji from Birga.



Fig. 11 - The probable site of the ancient village of Dabelik. To the left of the hill, the channel that conveys water to the hydroelectric power plant that produces electricity for Drosh (also visible, at an earlier stage, in fig. 10).

Though, once again, no knowledge was admitted about pre-islamic customs, myths, rites or holy places, there were traces of memory about non-Muslim ancestors. It was here that we heard the legend about the six brothers from Gromel who founded the Eastern area villages, which, however, was expressly declared untrue by various other informants. One of these brothers, according to this version, was Uzur Beg, from whom the village derives its name, who was not a Muslim and lived some twenty generations ago. Another brother was one Chorbu, who founded a village called Dabelik, which no longer exists, and whose name was remembered only with much difficulty by the oldest of our informants. This village was located between Lawi and Uzurbekande, very close to what is now the small water power plant that produces electricity for Drosh. In this spot there is a small but quite steep hill that rises above the valley bottom, which is most likely to have been the site of Dabelik (fig. 11). Chorbu is also credited with building himself a 'fort' (probably a *koṭ*) in a place called Sali, opposite Dabelik across the stream.

Like in other villages, we have made in Uzurbekande a brief inquiry about the knowledge of kinship terminology. The results can be referred to the entire Eastern area, since they are similar in nature (though different in details) to those obtained in Suwir, Kalkatak and Gromel. In all cases:

- 1) People who were otherwise very fluent in Kalashamun showed a very poor

knowledge of kinship terminology, which is what happens with a lot of Kho people who, unlike the Kalasha, ignore many of the terms that exist in their own language;

2) the terms they indicated often showed the influence of Khowar terminology distribution, e.g. identifying FaSi with MoBrWi (like in Khowar), rather than with FaBrWi, like in Kalashamun;

3) they showed substitution of Khowar terms for Kalasha ones (e.g. *gom'it* for *ʃbam'ur*), or influence of single Khowar terms, e.g. *w'awa* for 'grandmother' (Khowar *w'au*, Kalashamun *'awa* or *ghun'aya* in Birir and Jinjeret Kui);

4) they showed often sheer confusion, e.g. MoBr for FaBr, or BrWi for MoBrWi.

Altogether, what these elements point to, is a spectacular loss of relevance of kinship in the switch from Kalasha to Kho culture. It may be emphasized that, in Kalasha culture, while the incredibly deep and wide genealogical knowledge showed by some informants is not shared by most of the population, even the most far reaching kinship terms are well known to any adolescent.

### *Birga*

This is, for many reasons, one of the most interesting villages we have visited in the Eastern area. It is the only one where the Western dialect of Rumbur and Bumburet is spoken. It is the home of Babaji. And it has a unique example of Kalasha building.

Like elsewhere, our inquiry met here with some difficulties, especially after we shifted from the subject of Babaji's achievements, to that of the pre-islamic past.

Birga is a settlement which has not changed location since pre-islamic times. This is testified by the fact that the first storey of an old Kalasha *koṭ'ik* is still standing in the middle of the village. This building, otherwise very similar to the ones we have seen in Pashkuroni and Jinjeret Kuh, is unique in the fact that it has two small wooden horse heads protruding from the two sides of the entrance door towards the *inside* of the building (fig. 12). The two horse heads are a well known emblem of Kalasha culture. They appear at times to the sides of the *Ĵ'eṣṭak han* door, they appear on the small wooden emblem of Jeshtak inside the *han* (or, in Birir, inside the homes), and, in a single or double pair, they characterize many open air sanctuaries of male divinities. In all cases, however, the coupled horse heads are associated with an explicitly religious context, and in most instances they are considered the material sign (*niš'an*) of the divinity, i.e. what substitutes its image in a culture that, with the single exception first reported by Graziosi (1961), does not employ anthropomorphic representations of the gods.

Now, the *koṭ* in Birga is the only known instance in which the horse heads at the side of the door are found in a construction that has little similarities with a *Ĵ'eṣṭak han*, and was certainly used as a permanent dwelling. Horse or ram heads at the side



Fig. 12 - One of the two horse heads at the sides of the door inside the *koṭ* of Birga.

of the *Ĵeṣṭak han* door are always found protruding towards the outside of the building, but in some cases another pair of heads is directed towards the interior.

In the total absence of any information from the villagers, it is quite difficult to interpret the nature and function of this building. It is worth noting, however, that one converted Kalasha from Bumburet, whom we met in Jinjeret Kuh just before visiting Birga, had described this building as a *Ĵeṣṭak han*. As a matter of fact, there are good reasons to advance the hypothesis that the *koṭ* in Birga may be the only surviving instance in Kalasha culture of the kind of building that held the place of the *Ĵeṣṭak han* before the latter was imported from Kafiristan at the time of Nanga Dehar, some fifteen generations ago.

We know that certain small lineages in Rumbur keep their Jeshtak emblem in private houses that are used in certain ceremonial occasions instead of the *han* (Alb. Cacopardo 1974: 14; Parkes 1983: 376). We know that in most of ancient Kafiristan the counterpart of the *Ĵeṣṭak han* was a kind of lineage house which, besides its ceremonial functions, was permanently inhabited by a prominent lineage elder (Jones & Parkes 1984; Klimburg 1976). And Karl Wutt mentions one destroyed *koṭ* in the village of Anish in Bumburet, which once had the same central columns that now characterize the *Ĵeṣṭak han*, one of which he has personally seen re-employed in a goat stable (Wutt 1976: 139). It seems therefore quite reasonable to suppose that, before the *Ĵeṣṭak han* became a specialized ceremonial building, some of its functions

were performed in the first storey of this kind of communal dwellings, which probably hosted the emblem of Jeshtak for the lineage.

What remains to be explained is the fact that the two horse heads are directed only inside. Since the *koṭ* were defensive structures, especially intended to protect the people against close up attacks, it is not unlikely that the heads were thus protected against the risk of their being cut by attacking Muslim enemies. The cutting of horse heads at the sanctuaries has been a common event during the long period of aggressive Muslim intolerance against the Kalasha. Another possibility, of course, is that another pair of heads outside the building was actually cut some time in the past, though we could see no traces of them.

On one wooden beam outside the *koṭ'ik*, there was also a circular incision, rather boldly carved as is common in the Kalasha style, of the type the Kalasha call *kh'āra* (shield). This was isolated and casually positioned, and may well be the effect of a merely decorative intention, since the *kh'āra* is known elsewhere in Kalasha culture and throughout Nuristan as decorative element in secular buildings and artifacts (Edelberg & Jones 1979: *passim*; Wutt 1976: 154).

The villagers stated that there used to be four *koṭ'ik* in the village, once again all quite close together. One person, who was not older than sixty, said he had seen them all four standing, at least with the first floor still intact. He also added they were soon going to destroy this last one.

It is quite a shame that the appeal addressed by Morgenstierne and Edelberg to the Secretary General of Unesco at the end of the Hindu Kush Cultural Conference of 1970 (Jettmar & Edelberg 1974: 134-35) for the 'preservation of certain buildings of outstanding cultural value' has not been heeded.

In one of his contributions to that conference, Wazir Ali Shah suggested that 'we should concentrate on the protection of certain historical, religious and cultural buildings along with their contents', but he added that 'Pakistan and Afghanistan are developing countries and have not enough resources to undertake such schemes on a large scale in a truly scientific way' (Wazir Ali Shah 1974c: 119), thus invoking the help of UNESCO. International help is certainly needed. It may be remarked, at any rate, that though scientific restoration is certainly very expensive, it should not take too many resources to just keep the people from destroying the existent.

Going back to the *koṭ* in Birga, this was said to have belonged to Beduk, the oldest pre-Muslim ancestor remembered, and head of the Beduke *kam*. Our attempts at reconstructing the genealogy of the Beduke met with considerable difficulty since we received much conflicting information. The best we can do is to report the picture we received from one informant, Qazi Zeinullah Abidin from Khairabad, who was considered the most knowledgeable by all others. His version of the genealogy is reproduced in fig. 8. According to him, Beduk was the grandfather of Babaji, who is said to have been born in the very building we have talked about. Babaji's father, Sumarai, had three sons. The descendants of the other two brothers are now living in Birga, while the direct offspring of Babaji live in Khairabad, a village in the main

valley which was founded in the time of Mehtar Shah Afzal II (who reigned 1837-1855) by Babaji's son Akhun Baba, who was also a *buzurug* who continued the proselytizing work of his father.

According to the tradition, Shekh Mahmud Muzzafar al-Maruf Babaji Sahib (his pre-Muslim name is not known) was very young when he went to Saukana, which is now a suburb of Peshawar, to pursue his Muslim studies under Miah Omar Sahib. From there he first returned once and was not welcome by his unconverted relatives. He then came back a second time and settled in a hermitage on the mountain near Birga, from where he travelled to convert the whole area. This second return is dated, as we have seen, 1769. He is said to have converted 6000 people, which is most likely an exaggeration. Babaji's son, Akhun Baba, first studied under Babaji and then, after his death, under one Tordher Baba, in the area of Mardan. He then came back to Chitral to continue the work of his father and convert more people, and finally received from Shah Afzal II the land of Khairabad, which he irrigated and settled.

Babaji and Akhun Baba are credited with the conversion of the entire Eastern Area. However, there are good reasons to believe that the conversion was a long process that took place over more than a century altogether. For one thing, while Babaji was considered responsible for conversion in all the villages of Shishi Kuh, his name was never mentioned to us in any of the other converted villages of the Eastern area. This may indicate that the conversion of the main valley settlements has taken place under different circumstances.

But there are also other elements. Among all the disparate notions we recorded about the time of conversion, perhaps the most frequent was that it had taken place in the fifth generation above the youngest living one, i.e. around the middle of the 19th century. This, of course, is no definite proof, but we also have Schomberg's (1938: 211) above-mentioned statement that the former Kalasha of Drosh had been converted two or three generations earlier.

Furthermore, we have Biddulph's interesting comment on the fact that the Kalashamun-speaking people of 'Jinjuret, Loi, Sawair, Nager and Shishi [...] have become Mahommedans, though in other respects they adhere to their ancient customs' (1880: 64). It may be worth noting that, until Morgenstierne's research, the same was believed to be true of the people of the Kalashgum (Morgenstierne 1932: 38; see also Grierson 1919: 70 quoted above), while even among the former Kafirs of Nuristan, elements reported by various scholars point to the possibility that non-Muslim practices and beliefs were kept up, more or less covertly, throughout the first half of the 20th century<sup>(10)</sup>.

<sup>(10)</sup> According to Edelberg (Edelberg & Motamedi 1986: 6) there seemed to still be some old people practising the pre-islamic religion in Shtiwe (Parun) in 1948 and perhaps even in 1964. See also Klimburg 1976: 483 ('Islam has not yet penetrated totally'), Jones 1974: 268 ('in some villages certain celebrations from Kafir times are still observed') and Jettmar 1974: X.



Altogether, it seems likely that the process of conversion was slow and progressive, probably entailing periods of mixed practices in many communities, and that it was not completed before the second half of the 19th century.

Apart from the Beduke, the village of Birga has three other *kam* of Kalasha descent, called Uchi, Pinarek and Pinaushori. Of these we could not collect any coherent genealogy and, while it is clear that they are of post-Muslim formation, we could not establish, as in the case of Lawi, whether they are actual kinship groups rather than mere territorial divisions of the village. Birga has now some 60 houses, of which 15 belong to Kho immigrants, leaving 45 of Kalasha descent. According to one old man, there were 20 houses altogether in his youth.

As mentioned above, Birga has the unique peculiarity of being the only village of the Eastern area where the Northern dialect of Bumburet is spoken. Since we could not collect extensive samples of this dialect, further analysis is required to establish to what degree it may have differentiated in time from the speech of the Kalashgum. What is quite surprising is that neither among the unconverted Kalasha nor in Birga we could find any historical or mythological explanation for this affinity. The people of Birga stated that they had never heard of ancestors coming from the Kalashgum.

As far as knowledge and use of the language, the situation seemed similar to the other villages, though some stated that Birga had abandoned the language somewhat earlier, with the result that middle-aged people seem to have very little knowledge of it.

#### *Babaji and the Conversion of Shishi Kuh in the Oral Tradition of the Unconverted Kalasha*

There are different stories about the conversion of Shishi Kuh in the oral tradition of the unconverted Kalasha. An analysis of the various versions of these myths would alone make up for a separate article. We shall therefore only point out their existence.

One story concerns Babaji, who is said to have gone to study Islam in Swat as a young man. When he was there he learned from a dream that his father had died and, thanks to the magic of his Muslim teacher, was instantaneously removed to the *han* of Birga, where he found the people dancing for his father's funerals. When the time came to carry the body to the cemetery, the snow was so high that they could not get through, but Babaji started beating the snow with a stick and miraculously made it to melt. The young Babaji, who was already a Muslim, told his mother and the other people to follow the mourning customs of the Kalasha, i.e. for the mother to stay forty days inside the house, and the men of the *kam* to shave their heads and let their beards grow — which he himself, however, did not do. It was only many years later that he came back and converted the people.

In another version, the person who melts the snow is not Babaji, but his son Akhun, who comes from Drosh to his father's funerals after that Babaji had already converted most of the Eastern area.

Another story gives an entirely different narrative of the conversion of Shishi

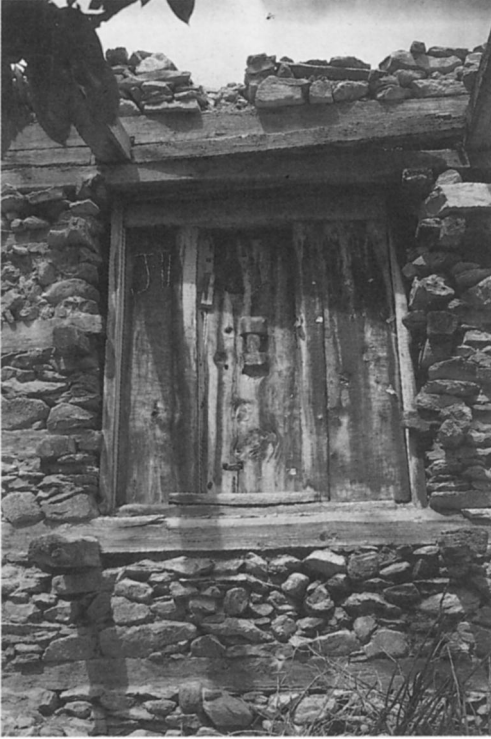


Fig. 13 - The door of the *koṭ* in Birga. Like in all other similar buildings, the door was set quite high on the wall for defensive reasons, and was reached through a long *ṣiṭ* ladder like the one depicted in fig. 11.

Kuh. Syntethizing the different versions, it appears that Mohtaram Shah Kator II, the above mentioned slayer of Khairullah, had a special relationship with the Kalasha of Shishi Kuh, because he had been nursed by a woman of that valley according to the Chitrالي custom mentioned by Morgenstierne (1932: 50) and Schomberg (1938: 225-26). Once a grown up, he married a girl from his foster parents' village, and through this special relation peacefully convinced the inhabitants to convert, allowing them to hold their last Joshi before that. He then fell in love for another woman, and, when the time for the Joshi came, he went to the festival and sang a beautiful song (of which we have collected two versions) to ask pardon from his father in law and announce the advent of the light of Islam. A place called *Kal'asa piṇḍ'uri bronz* (the round meadow of the Kalasha), near Kelas, is said to have been the location of this festival. A version of this legend, in which the conversion seems to have been a violent one, is related by Loude (1980: 138).

We have found no trace of this legend in the whole Eastern area. We believe it may refer to a first wave of conversion, perhaps concerning the village of Kelas, connected through this special relationship with this Mehtar. But the association of Babaji with a more or less peaceful conversion of the Eastern area seems much more likely to be a historical fact.

### *Other Oral Traditions about the Eastern Area among the Unconverted Kalasha*

We have also inquired about other memories concerning the Eastern area in the Kalashgum. Several legends and memories survive concerning areas and villages of Southern Chitral which were converted in some unspecified past and have not been speaking Kalashamun for a long time. We shall mention some of these in the last part of this report. Concerning the villages we have visited in the Eastern area, we have only heard from kazi Khoshnawaz of Balanguru (about whom see Loude 1984: 58-60 and Parkes 1983: 232-35, & *passim*) that there was a *d'ewa dur* (open air sanctuary) of a god called Ariget in Birga, exactly where Babaji's tomb now stands. The *niš'an* of Ariget was a wooden board or pole, with carvings similar to those now found on the *mal'eri* boards of the *d'ewa dur* in Rumbur (Alb. Cacopardo 1974: 130; Wutt 1976: 139). Ariget is not worshipped by the unconverted Kalasha of today, but Khoshnawaz specified that another *d'ewa dur* to his name was in Jughur, opposite Chitral town across the river, in a place called Diwa-shish.

From another informant, Sherbek of Birir, we heard that his grandfather's grandfather Ramdin went to Shishi Kuh for Chaumos, which he witnessed in Lawi (where he was the guest of an elder called Bala Khan) and in Birganisar, where his host was one Shurasi.

Sherbek also stated that the Prun festival of Birir was held as well, not only in Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh, but in Bronsar (the Kalasha name for Kalkatak), Suwir, Lawi and Birga, but, curiously, not in Gromel or Biyori. Chaumos was held everywhere, but in Bronsar, Lawi, Biyori and Suwir the festivity that followed Chaumos ten days after its end was not, like in Rumbur and Bumburet, the Dagarik, but the Lagawur, like in Birir, Urtsun and Jinjeret Kuh. These elements, though rather vague and contradictory, point to a closer resemblance of the Eastern area with the culture of Birir rather than that of Bumburet and Rumbur.

Sherbek also stated that there was once a *Maband'eu dur* in Birga, in a place called Gosh Kui not far from the village, and that Lawi had a *d'ewa dur* of Grimun, a Birir divinity (Schomberg 1938: 202-203; Hussam ul-Mulk 1974: 82). He also knew about the presence of a *Maband'eu dur* in Suwir. Most of these informations, however, coming only from one informant, are not definitely reliable.

### *Conclusions*

The results of this first part of our inquiry into former Kalasha cultures of Southern Chitral are significant under many respects. In the first place they confirm the existence and show the relevance of an Eastern area of Kalasha culture which certainly had a prominent role in the Kalasha universe of the recent past and had so far escaped anthropological attention. We have sufficient elements of oral tradition to infer that the Eastern culture was quite similar to the known Kalasha culture of today

and possibly closer to the Birir variety than to that of Bumburet and Rumbur.

The enlargement of the picture to include the Eastern and Southern areas of Kalasha culture may open new perspectives even on what we already knew. The valley of Bumburet (with its offshoot of Rumbur) has always been seen as the true center of Kalasha culture, while Birir, with its peculiarities that many have noted since Schömberg's time, was considered a somewhat peripheric exception to the rule. As such it has received comparatively little attention <sup>(11)</sup>.

By broadening our perspective, however, we are led to suspect that Birir may be the last remnant of a broader and more ancient culture, which actually included the true center of the Kalasha world. Bumburet and Rumbur may turn out to be the peripheric exception to this complex, an exception brought about only a few centuries ago by a peculiar local heresy, prophesied by Nanga Dehar. We shall return on the subject in the third section of this report.

As far as the other results are concerned, we have identified two buildings of outstanding interest, the *koṭ* of Birga and Pashkuron, which deserve to be protected from destruction, and we have located various sites that might be of interest for future archaeological investigation. Many aspects of the process of change from pre-Muslim to Islamic culture have been investigated and new contributions have been given to the definition of the extension and composition of the Eastern area culture — the discovery of the Western dialect community of Birga in Shishi Kuh being one of the most significant. Though our attempts at reconstructing genealogies have been mostly frustrated, we have collected several names of pre-islamic ancestors: Grambir from Gromel, Dhondi from Kalkatak, the three brothers Lachkar Shah, Mirza Ali Shah and Balajon Shah from Suwir, Ghana Gumbi from Lawi, Chorbu and Uzur Beg from Uzurbekande, and Beduk and Sumarai from Birga. However insignificant this may seem, we believe it may help, as research progresses on Southern Chitral, in reconstructing some aspects of the past.

But a lot remains open for further research to inquire upon. As we have noted earlier, it is quite possible that a longer stay on the field, with a much deeper integration of the researchers in the community, might bring to light existing significant memories of pre-islamic cultures that we have not been able to unveil. But the most urgent task of research certainly concerns the linguists, who need to investigate in depth the nature and distribution of the Eastern dialect before it disappears, in view of the contributions that such an analysis is likely to bring to the study of the origins and history of Kalasha presence in Chitral.

By a rough estimate, it seems likely that the number of people who possess a good active knowledge of Kalashamun in the Eastern area ranges somewhere between

<sup>(11)</sup> For instance, the existing accounts of the autumn wine festival of Prun (Loude & Lièvre 1984: 76-79; Palwal 1974: 93-94) a very important ritual, are not enough to satisfy scientific curiosity, while the Chaumos of Birir has never been reported in detail.

500 and 800. These are people who were raised in the use of the language as mother tongue. Younger people who have perfect passive knowledge and some active control of the language are probably from two to three times as many.

Finally, there is one hope. Anthropological interest towards the Kalasha has given a powerful contribution to the preservation of that culture, by changing the attitude of government authorities and people towards what was once (and partly still is) regarded as a degenerate and despicable minority. It is possible that research into the Eastern area culture might at least contribute to change the attitude of the former Kalasha towards their own heritage. We have seen some signs of this possibility during our brief investigations, and a process of this kind has taken place, with a truly revolutionary impact, in many areas of anthropological interest, especially South America and Australia. There are reasons to expect it may extend in the future to other parts of the Third World. If this will help the people we have studied to rediscover a new self respect and a justified pride in their past heritage, our work shall not have been useless.

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